

# Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

## Invasion of Afghanistan: The Soviet Union

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
III. People, Places, and Environments  
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions  
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance  
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption  
IX. Global Connections  
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Explain the reasons for the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union
- Analyze the reactions of President Carter to the invasion
- Validate the stand of the United States and/or suggest different alternatives

Time: 1–2 class periods

Materials: Documents: **1980** *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*  
**1980** *The Carter Doctrine*

Resources: *Timeline: The Later Cold War*  
*Reading: The Olympic Boycott, 1980*  
*Newsweek Cover—January 28, 1980*

Access to President Carter's Speeches

- Afghanistan: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2Y4t0-\\_9MY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2Y4t0-_9MY)
- State of the Union: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_-szG7E0PU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_-szG7E0PU&feature=related)

Exercises: *Rings of Protest*

Procedures:

### *Setting the Stage*

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late 1979 in support of the communist Afghan government's conflict with a loose alliance of anti-communist fighters—known as the *mujahideen*. Even though the *mujahideen* were fragmented, they benefitted from American support, including shipments of arms through Pakistan. Muslims from around the world joined the fight against the Soviet Union.

The war settled into a stalemate with the Soviets controlling the cities and the *mujahidden* controlling the countryside. Guerilla tactics proved to be effective against the traditional power of the Soviet Union. Millions of Afghans fled to neighboring Pakistan and Iran. The USSR finally withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving the *mujahideen* to fight each other for power.

The Taliban emerged as the leaders of the new government and retained possession of the weapons provided by the United States. One day those weapons would be used against Americans.

- 1.** Provide students with—or project—the resource, *Newsweek Cover—January 28, 1980*.
- 2.** Have students create a list of observations (statements, questions) while viewing the *Newsweek* cover. (No teacher input at this point.)
- 3.** Have students share their ideas. (Still no teacher input. The students' speculations and facts will be verified in the next activity.)
- 4.** Students should keep these comments in mind as they read the documents, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan* and *Unsatisfactory Relations*.
- 5.** Use both documents to complete the exercise, *Rings of Protest*.

*An Option:*

- 6.** President Carter's speeches are available for viewing, which students may do while following their written copies. Sources for speeches are listed under Resources.
- 7.** Instructions for exercise, *Rings of Protest*:
  - a.** Have students identify the reasons for Afghanistan's importance in this Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, analyzing WHY the United States was protesting and implementing measures against the Soviets.
  - b.** Students should list each reason and action in the appropriate ring: Economic, Religious, Geographic, Political, and Social.
- 8.** Discuss the reasons and actions identified by students.
  - a.** Which of President Carter's actions seemed most forceful?
  - b.** Assess the strengths and weaknesses of President Carter's plan for action against the Soviet Union.
  - c.** What impact was the President's actions intended to have?
  - d.** Discuss the issue of proxy fighting during the Cold War. Afghanistan was not the only country where the United States and the Soviet Union took opposing sides and fought each other "indirectly."
  - e.** From the State of the Union speech, determine which comments became known as the Carter Doctrine.
  - f.** What is the premise of the Doctrine? Does this differ from other presidents when interacting with the Middle East? Explain.
  - g.** What alternative approaches could President Carter have taken *against the Soviet Union*?
  - h.** If you had been a Representative or Senator at the time, would you have supported President Carter's proposals?

- i. How does this accumulated knowledge compare with the responses made earlier when students commented about the *Newsweek* cover?
- 9. Distribute copies of the reading, *The Olympic Boycott, 1980*. Explain that the story of the boycott is only one element of the United States response to actions by the Soviet Union. Have students assess the use of an Olympic Boycott as a political tool.
- 10. Correlate the events in 1980s Afghanistan with current action. ■